



Air Force Recruit Fitness Study

THE CHALLENGE

The physical conditioning (PC) program conducted during basic military training (BMT) had not changed in over two decades. Evidence indicated that airmen were not physically fit upon graduation. A new, effective PC program was needed to help ensure that the Air Force is fit to fulfill its global mission.

THE RESPONSE

In close cooperation with BMT representatives, OPHSA designed, funded, and managed a major field study of the proposed new PC regimen.

THE NEW PROGRAM

The new program has these features:

- ☐ An initial recruit fitness assessment
- ☐ Grouping of trainees by running ability level
- ☐ Running for time instead of distance
- ☐ Circuit resistance training
- ☐ Peer encouragement

The efficacy of the new fitness program was measured in three ways, to answer the three study-design questions.

- Physical performance was rated by trainee times for the two-mile test run, and the number of pull-ups and push-ups performed.
- Attitudes towards physical fitness were assessed before and after the new and old programs.
- Clinic visits by trainees were monitored to evaluate the new program's impact on injuries.

Results of the study showed trainees achieved superior conditioning from the new program:

- ☒ Time improvements for the two-mile test run were far greater than under the old PC program (roughly triple the improvement under the new regime)
- ☒ Gains for males in pull-ups and push-ups were greater
- ☒ Subjective perceptions of the trainees' own improvement were more positive
- ☒ The injury rate showed no rise, despite nearly quadrupling the mileage run during training

BMT has adopted the improved PC program for all 35,000 airmen it trains each year.

Subsequently, OPHSA designed, validated, and helped implement a new PC program for technical school students that builds on this successful beginning.